

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

Four aberrantly plumaged birds observed in Kenya

Britton (1969) gives the incidence of albinism in the c. 25 000 bird skins held by the National Museums of Kenya at Nairobi as c. 0.02 per cent, while the proportion in 3000 birds that he personally netted and handled was c. 0.13 per cent. These very low percentages concur with the very small numbers of abnormally coloured birds that are encountered during the numerous bird-watching and wildlife safaris that we lead in Kenya. Here we report four aberrantly plumaged individuals.

Ring-necked Dove *Streptopelia capicola*

On 15 June 1989, a semi-albino was seen c. 40 km west of Narok along the main B3 road. As this individual flew away amidst a small number of others of the same species, the entire dorsal surface of its closed tail could be seen to be a bright, pure white, extremely prominent even at some distance. The rest of its plumage features were normal.

Superb Starling *Spreo superbus*

During February 1989, about 70 km west of Narok on the C13 road, an albino Superb Starling was watched amongst a small flock of its congeners. This bird was entirely white, with pink eyes and pale legs. Identification was based upon the identical size and structure of its companions.

White-headed Buffalo Weaver *Dinemellia dinemelli*

A leucistic individual was seen along the main Nairobi–Mombasa road about 15 km north of Hunter's Lodge on 2 May 1981. This bird had the usual plumage colourations of the species except that the under-tail coverts were an abnormally pale orange, rather than a darker orange-red, the white flash at the base of the primaries was abnormally large and the tail, mantle and wings—normally a medium to darkish brown—were a very pale, creamy brown. Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1960) note that loss of pigment is not uncommon in this species.

Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*

A xanthochroic individual was present near the Hippo Pools in Nairobi National Park on 24 June 1986. The entire bird was a pale yellowish colour, apart from the bill, lores and eyestripe, the normal, red colour of which identified the species.

References

- BRITTON, P.L. 1969. Some records of albinism in East Africa. *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 89: 169–171.
- MACKWORTH-PRAED, C.W. & GRANT, C.H.B. 1960. *African handbook of birds. Series I, vol. 2. Birds of eastern and north eastern Africa*. London: Longmans, Green & Co.

*Dr Adrian D. Lewis, 36 Lilymead Avenue, Knowle, Bristol BS4 2BX, England and
Mel F. Ogola, Box 48019, Nairobi*